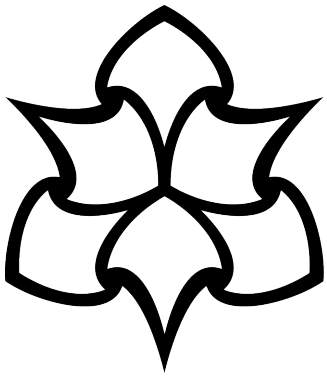

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Abstract

Purpose - This paper investigates the social construction of gendered subjects in entrepreneurship education (EEd), through the analysis of course descriptions. For this purpose, the analytical constructs of the Fictive Student and the Fictive Entrepreneur are developed.

Approach - Through analysis of 86 course descriptions from 81 universities in 21 countries, this study examines the degree to which course descriptions use gendered language, how such language constructs gendered subjects, and the resultant implications.

Findings - This paper finds that course descriptions are predominantly, but not exclusively, masculine in their language. More importantly, the distribution of feminine and masculine language is uneven across course descriptions. Context variables such as regional or national culture differences do not explain this distribution. Instead, the phenomenon is explained by course content/type; whereby practice-based entrepreneurship courses are highly masculine, compared to traditional academic courses, where students learn about entrepreneurship as a social phenomenon.

Practical implications - Universities and educators have not taken into account recent research about the real and possible negative consequences of positioning entrepreneurship in a stereotypical, masculinized fashion. This may offer an inexpensive opportunity to improve recruitment and description accuracy.

Originality/value - The paper's contribution is fourfold. First, it contributes to debates on the gendering of entrepreneurship by extending these into EEd. Second, it extends Sarasvathy's (2004) concern with barriers *to*, rather than incentives *for*, entrepreneurship to include EEd. Third, it contributes to the emerging literature on entrepreneurship as practice, by highlighting the masculization of EEd, as it gets closer to practice and the role of language in this. Finally, it highlights the gendered implications of English medium courses.

Keywords Course description, Entrepreneurship education, Gender, Higher education, Course type

Paper type Research paper

Introduction

This paper investigates the social construction of gendered subjects in Entrepreneurship Education (EEd), through an analysis of course descriptions from Higher Education Institutions (HEIs). This focus is important in light of emerging research on the impact of EEd on women (Gupta *et al*., 2009) which suggests that they may gain more positive benefits from EEd than men (Bae *et al.*, 2014; Terjesen *et al.*, 2016). Given that those who are highly educated are more likely to start businesses (Schøtt, 2009), that more women than ever are pursuing higher education (Eurostat, 2016), and that female students have higher entrepreneurial intentions than male students (Haus *et al*., 2013), one would expect more women than men to participate in entrepreneurship courses. Yet, this does not appear to be the case (Menzies and Tatroff, 2006; Petridou *et al*., 2009).

Broader societal and cultural cues about the typical entrepreneur, and the types of (westernized and masculinized) behaviours required to succeed as an entrepreneur (Ahl, 2006; Marlow and McAdam, 2013) can combine to produce a discourse of entrepreneurship that embodies, "particular forms of masculinity" (Hamilton, 2014: 703). Such masculinized discourses can act as a "barrier" to some students (Sarasvathy, 2004). When universities reproduce such discourses, some students, particularly women, may face negative perceptual outcomes (Jones, 2015). The gendering of entrepreneurship has received increasing attention in recent years (Ahl, 2006; Hughes *et al*., 2012; Marlow and Swail, 2014). However, this body of critical research is largely ignored in EEd contexts (Rae *et al*., 2012; Wyrwich *et al*., 2016) and explicitly feminist analyses of entrepreneurship and EEd are rare (Hamilton, 2014; Henry *et al.*, 2016).

The emergence of research that challenges the mainstream masculinization of entrepreneurship prompted the authors to investigate whether such critiques and awareness are reflected in EEd in higher education (HE). Many entrepreneurship educators *also* research entrepreneurship and, thus, are likely to be aware of the latest debates on the potential consequences of a masculinized discourse (Ahl and Marlow, 2012). Analysing course descriptions supports an investigation of whether HEIs reproduce or challenge mainstream gendered conceptualizations of entrepreneurship. Therefore, the first objective of this paper is *to investigate the degree to which course descriptions use gendered language.*

Sarasvathy (2004:713) argues that because, "some people want to become entrepreneurs *and do not*, we need to study *barriers* to entrepreneurship" (original emphasis) and suggests that we reformulate our research questions to, "What barriers to entrepreneurship exist?" rather than, "what induces people to become entrepreneurs?"

(p.709). Analysing course descriptions may help us to understand the potential barriers that these present. For example, women may be less willing to pursue EEd if course descriptions do not fit their gender identity—where a heroic, stereotypical masculine construction of entrepreneurship is presented (Hytti and Heinonen, 2013). The second objective of this paper is therefore, *to analyse the role of gendered language in EEd in constructing students and entrepreneurs*.

We argue that the suggested objectives of EEd courses may further emphasize gendered subject constructions. Over the past two decades, EEd research has documented three types of courses: about, for, and through entrepreneurship (Hannon, 2005). The final objective of this paper is *to consider the role of gendered language in each of these different types of entrepreneurship course descriptions*.

With these three objectives, this paper seeks to draw on new opportunities to make theoretical connections, "between identification processes, gender, and language" (Hamilton, 2014: 704). In doing so, it contributes by extending debates on the masculinization of entrepreneurship into EEd. Further, it extends Sarasvathy's (2004) concern with barriers to include EEd. Finally, it contributes to the emerging literature on entrepreneurship as practice by highlighting the gendering of practice and the role of language in this process.

The paper starts by conceptualizing the interplay of gender and language. It then considers the importance of language, in the gendered construction of the subjects "entrepreneurs" and "students," before outlining the different types of EEd courses in HEIs and the role of course descriptions in student course choices. It continues with an account of the research methodology and analysis, and presentation of findings. This is followed by a discussion of the findings and resultant implications. The paper concludes by highlighting contributions and suggesting future research directions.

The interplay of gender and language

For feminist and other critical researchers, gender refers to socially produced distinctions between men and women (Acker, 1990; Connell, 2009). The term *sex* represents how people are categorised as male and female, while the term *gender* represents the meanings that society places on such categorisation (Malach-Pines and Schwartz, 2008). Although conceptually this study separates biological sex from gender, we acknowledge that cultural and social beliefs, "cannot be separated from biological 'knowledge'. The meaning associated with the two gender categories (male and female) unavoidably clouds every aspect of thought, perception and behaviour" (Weatherall, 2002: 81).

Language is recognized as an important site for the construction of gender roles and gendered social identities (Coates, 2004; Holmes, 2007). In line with our conceptualisation of gender, we take a social constructionist approach, viewing gender as a dynamic social construct rather than as an essentialist, social category. Consequently, men and women learn to *do* gender (West and Zimmerman, 1987) rather than statically *being* male or female. As such, gender is also something that we can do unto others (Czarniawska, 2006) in our interactions with them. This doing of gender is a result of many years of socialisation, and is often performed subconsciously, through everyday practices (Riforgiate and Ruder, 2017).

As such, the authors take a view of gender where, in their everyday talk and texts, individuals constitute themselves, others, and the world they inhabit as recognizably gendered, in a taken-for-granted way (Stokoe, 2005). Nadesan and Trethewey (2000: 224) argue that all texts bear, "the traces of multiple discourses, multiple statements about the nature and relationships among social constructs." Making these discourses and relationships visible is the first step in challenging and addressing them, and a social constructionist approach, "offers both an explanatory framework and a tool for documenting change" (after Holmes, 2007: 60). This also addresses recent calls to develop gender and entrepreneurship focused methodologies, to include analysis of language and discourse, which foreground feminist perspectives (Henry *et al.*, 2016).

Furthermore, entry into EEd may be subject to a, "regulatory scheme of gender" (Brown, 1997: 87), which can be made visible through analysing the construction of gendered subjects. This is a challenging analysis because the gendered codes in language often go, "without saying, because they come without saying" (Bourdieu, 1977: 167). Thus, the use of, and responses to, gendered language is subtler than the obviously sexist approaches of, for example, the explicit use of pronouns such as "he" for entrepreneurs or in terms such as "businessman."

Some suggest that men and women use and respond to language differently (Bamman *et al.*, 2014) and the debate over whether this is due to intrinsic differences between men and women or attributable to exposure to external societal gendered expectations and stereotypes continues (Leaper and Bigler, 2004). However, naturalized mobilization of gendered language has been shown to prompt the assignment of gender to non-specified subjects, where subjects are often presumed to be male (Merritt and Kok, 1995). This echoes De Beauvoir's (1952) argument that women are seen as the "other;" which can be found today in terms such as "female entrepreneurship." Such approaches position men as the unspoken norm and women in the inferior realm of the feminine (Marlow, 2002) with masculinity

being privileged and uncritically equated with excellence (Bourdieu, 1998). Indeed, gender hierarchies and cues are so pervasive that social cognition is imbued with an, "automacity of gender" (Lemm, Dabady, and Banaji, 2005: 220).

The gendered construction of fictive subjects: The Fictive Student and the Fictive Entrepreneur

Bourdieu and Passeron (1994: 17) originally suggested the concept of the Fictive Student and emphasized the interplay of objective and subjective positions, suggesting that the position of the student, "compels them to enter into the game of fictive communication." Windle (2009: 94) argues that fictive subject constructions are often subconscious on the part of both educators and students, and that the suggested norms alienate *real* students who do not fit the socially narrow mould of the ideal *Fictive* Student. Nadesan and Trethewey (2000: 228) argue that the, "entrepreneurial subject…implicitly emerges as normatively masculine in character." However, Bourdieu and Passeron's notion of the Fictive Student is gender neutral, so this paper extends the concept to consider how the Fictive Student may be gendered. It further extends the notion of fictive subjects by analysing how HEIs and educators also construct the Fictive Entrepreneur within course descriptions.

To conceptualize the Fictive Student and Entrepreneur as gendered subjects, and to analyse general linguistic style, this paper draws on Bem's seminal work and the Bem Sex Role Inventory (BSRI) (1974). The BSRI is widely used to investigate tacitly gendered assumptions, with words such as "competitive," "assertive," and "risk-taking" associated with masculinity, and words such as "gentle," "yielding," and "shy" associated with femininity. Some questions its relevance today (DeFrancisco and Palczewski, 2007; Hoffman and Borders, 2001), arguing that the BSRI has been the victim of the development of English over time. Furthermore, it is not specific to the field of entrepreneurship. Consequently, this paper supplements Bem's work with two contemporary gendered language studies (Ahl, 2006; Gaucher *et al*., 2011). Ahl's work, based on Bem, updates and extends the BSRI into entrepreneurship, while Gaucher *et al's* work, on gendered language in job advertisements, provides an updated glossary of gendered language.

In line with the paper's social constructionist approach, we employ a social feminist perspective, emphasizing social structure and its role in shaping different experiences for men and women (Fischer *et al*., 1993). Calás *et al.* (2009: 565) frame social feminism as including concerns about the, "favoured representations of entrepreneurship" and the gendering of knowledge. Social feminism recognizes, "difference but in a context of equality. This

difference arises essentially from socialization processes which shape gendered forms of behaviour." (Marlow and Patton, 2005: 721). This paper further conceptualizes gendered and constructed subjects in texts as fictive subjects, in that they are brought into being through the descriptive language and situational cues in course descriptions (Murphy, *et al.*, 2007).

The paper leverages the concepts of the Fictive Entrepreneur and the Fictive Entrepreneurship student, to explore the construction of gendered subjects in course descriptions. Fictive subjects are positioned as such because they are imagined by the educator/institution and developed within official documents such as course descriptions; with such subjects representing entrepreneurship and success in EEd (Jones, 2014). Here the argument is that EEd courses attempt to create affinity between the real students and the fictive subjects constructed in the course descriptions, and with the suggested classroom activities, guest speakers, and assessments. Subjectivity suggests that we *are* subjects, and in this respect we have agency, but this also, "connotes both the presence of an agentic self and being an object, however temporarily, of others' actions." (Korteweg, 2003: 447).

Various studies have found that men and women indicate different reasons for pursuing entrepreneurship courses. For example, Duval-Couetil *et al*. (2014) found that men and women differed significantly on four out of seven reasons for enrolling in EEd classes. They suggest that such differences were, "likely reflecting socially constructed gender career stereotypes" and consequently argue for, "entrepreneurship curricula that are gender neutral and diverse" (Duval-Couetil *et al*., 2014: 447). It thus seems that masculinization of EEd remains pervasive within HE and that gendered course descriptions may act as a barrier to those students who do not perceive courses as fitting or welcoming. Additionally, students find courses relevant when they are perceived as supporting their personal needs and/or career goals (Frymier, 2002). For Frymier, relevance is based on how we perceive the messages we are given and these are influenced by the characteristics of the message and the personal characteristics of the receiver. We suggest that masculinized language has the potential to appear *more* relevant and accessible to men, given their socialization into masculinity and the broader masculinization of entrepreneurship.

It is noteworthy that, as students, women have higher entrepreneurial intentions than men (Haus *et al.* 2013). Indeed, Haus *et al.* (2013) suggest that women plan earlier and therefore are able to indicate higher entrepreneurial intentions prior to making career choices (while still students) than men; a proposition supported by others (Díaz-García and Jiménez-Moreno, 2010). However, after graduation, men indicate stronger intentions to become entrepreneurs. This finding does not appear to reflect lack of motivation, but suggests that

women experience hindrances (Haus *et al*., 2013). Despite motivation and intentions, women choose EEd less frequently than men (Petridou *et al*., 2009) and the primary reason, reportedly, is lack of fit with personality (Hytti and Heinonen, 2013; Menzies and Tatroff, 2006). Furthermore, Yukongdi and Lopa's (2017) finding, that personal attitudes toward entrepreneurship are the strongest driving factor for a student's intention to pursue entrepreneurship, supports Haus *et al.'s* proposition that women experience hindrances and that they change their perception of fit with entrepreneurship during their time as students. One such hindrance could be the gendered construction of the entrepreneur and the student in course descriptions.

Such hindrances have magnified negative effects. For example, Yukongdi and Lopa (2017) found that, compared to males, female university students perceived being an entrepreneur as significantly less acceptable and hypothesized this was influenced by the masculine norms and values associated with entrepreneurship. In a study of high-school students, Kourilsky and Walstad (1998) found a need for more EEd and suggested that it would especially benefit women because of their perceived lack of entrepreneurship skills. This may be exacerbated by perceived differences between men and women's entrepreneurial skills (Petridou *et al*., 2009), and by more supportive family and community environments of men's propensity to become entrepreneurs (Zhang *et al*., 2009). Furthermore, Hamilton (2013: 90) argues that the dominant discourses of entrepreneurship can render entrepreneurial femininities invisible and that research, "should remain alert to the denial and masking of gender."

Entrepreneurship education courses and course descriptions

In 2005, Hannon summarized the development in EEd, stating that the commonly applied conceptualization of courses is "about," "for," and "through," which still is a widely accepted typology (Warhuus and Basaiawmoit, 2014). About-type courses study entrepreneurship theoretically as a social phenomenon (Laukkanen, 2000). For-type courses are more applied, and prepare students for, "what to do and how to make it happen" (Laukkanen, 2000: 26), and typically focus on the skills required to start new and manage small businesses (O'Connor, 2013). Through-type courses focus on personal involvement and experiential learning through participation in entrepreneurial activities (Heinonen and Hytti, 2010; Thrane *et al.*, 2016) and encourage students to feel the life-world of an entrepreneur (Gibb, 2011; Neck and Greene, 2011). Different types of courses tend to be taught and assessed differently and have different types of teachers (Levie, 1999; Pittaway and Edwards, 2012). It is also

likely that these different types of courses may attract different students disproportionally and incentivize students to become entrepreneurs to varying degrees. For example, courses about entrepreneurship carry few expectations that students will become entrepreneurs.

The course catalogue and the individual course descriptions within it are important documents for universities. Study boards use them to approve courses and they form the building blocks for university programs. For students, the course description is equivalent to a product declaration, often the most comprehensive source of information available, and an important precursor to student course choice (DellaGioia, 2008; Wilhelm and Comegys, 2004). Indeed, few students appear to choose an elective course without reading the course description. An exploratory survey among students on elective courses at one European university, conducted early on in the development of this paper, found that, of 73 students surveyed, 72 used the course descriptions and 51 *only* used the course description to make their choice.

Course descriptions have limitations as a dataset (Pittaway and Edwards 2012). At many institutions they are cumbersome to revise with long approval processes (Liddy, 2012) and thus change slowly. Nonetheless, researchers have used course descriptions to study course selection (Babad and Tayeb, 2003; DellaGioia, 2008; Wolf, 2009) and current practices in EEd (Pittaway and Edwards 2012; Warhuus and Basaiawmoit 2014). Course descriptions are the only texts available across universities and cultures. In addition, it is where institutions express their understanding of the Fictive Student and the Fictive Entrepreneur *before* students enter the entrepreneurship classroom. Therefore, an analysis based on course descriptions offers an unobstructed view of the role of gendered language in reproducing or challenging popular accounts of entrepreneurship.

Methodology

This paper investigates gender and entrepreneurship at a very early stage in the EEd pipeline, before students even enter the classroom. Guided by the three objectives above, course descriptions, the unit of analysis, are defined as any text made publicly available by the university about a specific course; typically provided through online course catalogues.

In leveraging Brine's (2008) three-stage approach to text analysis (see appendix), this paper employs some quantitative methods although it is mainly qualitative. This mixed-method is a "third-way" pragmatic approach, which acknowledges that the research objectives should drive the methods used (Onwuegbuzie and Leech 2005). The authors accept that quantitative/statistical methods are themselves social constructions with their own

limitations (Best, 2001, 2008; Iversen and Gergen, 1997) in producing, "Truths with a capital T" (Gergen and Gergen, 2004: 15) and also that constructionists need not limit themselves in their forms of inquiry (McNamee, 2010).

Sample

The sampled course descriptions were either published online or provided directly by an entrepreneurship educator. This investigation is only based on active descriptions (defined as in use for last, current, or coming semester/quarter at time of collection) to ensure contemporary relevance. To capture those descriptions most likely to inform student course choice, we prioritized descriptions for elective courses, rather than those that were a mandatory part of larger programs. To explore the issues raised about gendered language in previous research by Bem, Ahl and Gaucher *et al*, all of the course descriptions were in English.

In sampling course descriptions, we circumvented our own potential biases by avoiding web searches, personal networks/social media, etc. Rather, we first solicited the entrepreneurship email list "ENTREP," which yielded seven descriptions. We then searched websites of the home institutions of the first 75 corresponding authors (alphabetical order) of papers presented the RENT conference and Babson College Entrepreneurship Research Conference (Babson) (150 authors in total) for published course descriptions. We selected these conferences based on their internationally recognized focus on entrepreneurship and the likelihood that institutions sending researchers to these events would also offer research-based/university-level EEd. Given the unknown nature of the population and the limited prior research, this judgement-sampling strategy was intended to produce a broad, unbiased, productive dataset (Marshall, 1996). Finally, where descriptions were not available online, we contacted the corresponding author by email to solicit descriptions.

Our data collection strategy yielded a sample of 86 course descriptions representing 21 countries, due to the sampling strategy, primarily from Western Europe and North America. Although a large international data set, it is limited to descriptions written in English. These included English medium courses taught in countries where English is not the first language. Consequently, we did not engage in any translation of the sampled course descriptions and were working with the original texts. We recognize that this apparent privileging of the English language may be contested (Steyaert and Janssens, 2013). However, this was seen as an advantage in that English is found to have a low ratio of gender

differentiated pronouns and has a neutral gender assignment (Hechavarría *et al*., 2017) and thus offers authors a range of options in how to express themselves.

Content analysis

While there is no universally agreed upon approach to content analysis (Kohlbacher, 2006), in addition to Brine, our content analysis process is informed by Kaid and Wadsworth's (1989) approach.

First, we explored the dataset through word frequency queries and word clouds. As the descriptions were contaminated by names, titles, literature lists, etc., a data reduction read-through was done to extract the descriptive text (Namey *et al*., 2007). We then analysed these texts, using the same battery of queries and word clouds. This extracted descriptive text accounted for 32% of the total word count and formed the base for the subsequent data analyses (Brine, 2008).

According to Hsieh and Shannon (2005: 1277) there are three commonly used approaches to content analysis: conventional, directed, and summative and each approach aligns to the problems or questions asked. This investigation used a summative approach and started with a deductive/manifest analysis. In this process, we operationalized the masculine and feminine language categories (Bem, 1974); using Nvivo to perform 60 word searches for each of the 30 masculine and 30 feminine typified BSRI words.

Using the BSRI situates this research within the large body of gender research that has used this inventory over the years (Carver *et al*., 2013; Hoffman and Borders, 2001). However, because some of these terms are traits or concepts rather than single words, these are not all readily applicable to entrepreneurship. This posed a limitation to the use of simple words counts. To overcome this issue, we used Ahl's (2006) adaptation of the BRSI for an entrepreneurship context and Gaucher *et al's* (2011) updated gendered language categories. In doing so, the analysis moved from a manifest to an inductive/latent approach, where we coded the text based on these guides. The authors initially coded separately, and then compared coding and interpretations to ensure consistency. The latent approach involved comparing instances of gendered language (Hsieh and Shannon, 2005: 1277) and used synonyms for the gendered terms identified by Bem, Ahl, and Gaucher *et al*, to capture the nuances of language in the course descriptions. Additionally, this stage was broader in focus, analysing the use of metaphor and imagery, identifying subjects and their activities, and the underlying arguments and discourses constructed about the subjects and their suggested relationships (Brine, 2008).

This two-phased approach allowed for interrogation of the content for pre-identified words and codes, while providing scope for discovery and surprise. Using the coding framework, the authors coded for occurrences of text indicating the Fictive Student and Entrepreneur and the dominant gender of the text, resulting in four coding nodes: 1) Fictive-Student-Masculine; 2) Fictive-Student-Feminine; 3) Fictive-Entrepreneur-Feminine; 4) Fictive-Entrepreneur-Masculine.

The latent content analysis highlighted an unequal distribution of gendered language among course descriptions. To understand the contextual issues that might have been at play (Welter, 2011), the authors conducted further comparisons to understand this distribution: between EU and US descriptions, across the masculinity of different national cultures (Hofstede, 2001), and types of course, the findings of which are outlined below.

Findings

The manifest analysis (see above) yielded a 1-to-9 ratio of feminine to masculine words. This indicates that masculine language dominates and that course descriptions do not deviate from mainstream conceptualizations of entrepreneurship and are not sensitive to ongoing critiques of the masculinization of the field. However, as Brine's process indicates, this is a high-level and inadequate analysis, being only step 5 of her 10-step analytical process (see appendix). The next step, latent analysis (see above) highlighted that two out of three codes were masculine. This data is as shown in Table 1.

Insert Table 1 about here

Examples of language coded as masculine were descriptions of entrepreneurship as a "contact sport" and "not for the meek and mild." These entrepreneurs are involved in activities that are "risky and very hard work," they need to be resourceful with "innovative, pro-active and risk seeking behaviour." Entrepreneurs show "powers of managerial judgment" that require "vision," "confidence," and "leadership" and the "ability to identify and defend competitive advantage." Likewise, depictions of the masculine Fictive Student emphasize "critical analysis" being "strategic" and "technically skilled." For the masculine Fictive Student, *learning* to be entrepreneurial is also hard work, "if you cannot commit the time…this class is not for you." Assessment emphasizes "competition" and an ability to "persuasively present" to "external jurors" including "businessmen and top executives." The aim is to make students "superior opportunity assessors and shapers," which requires

"commitment, effort, time management and responsibility," all to be done in a "logical manner."

Although predominately masculine, about one third of the codes *were* feminine; describing entrepreneurship as "an inherently social, collaborative process" which takes place in "highly unstructured circumstance." Feminine Fictive Entrepreneurs find "opportunities, adapt, change, and improve themselves by continuously listening, thinking, and learning from others" in order to provide "sustainable economic, social and institutional change." Feminine Fictive Students engage in "collegial group activity," "sharing and building trust with your classmates," while developing "an awareness and appreciation of different cultural values" and reflecting on their "strengths and weaknesses," emphasizing "ethics," "trust," and an acknowledgement of personal and professional life.

Analysis of uneven distribution of gendered language

Further analysis of the distribution of the codes across the descriptions revealed a highly uneven distribution of gendered language; 83% contained masculine language and 50% feminine. In addition, 50% of feminine text was in 13% of the descriptions, and 73% of the masculine texts in 24% of the descriptions. Of the Fictive Student and Fictive Entrepreneur codes, 37% of the course descriptions were coded masculine only and 7% were coded feminine only. If course descriptions were simply reproducing the popular, highly masculine, portrayal of entrepreneurship, one should expect to see an even distribution of gendered language. Investigating the clustering of the gendered text required different ways of analysing the codes than discussed above. In order to capture the combination and interaction of the masculine and feminine language it was necessary to position them in relation to each other. Based on prior research (e.g., Shinnar *et al*., 2012), the descriptions were classified in accordance with their country of origin and the level of masculinity of the national culture. In analysing the distribution across countries, we found that the most meaningful grouping of countries was Europe/North America/Rest-of-the-world. Although there were indications of interesting differences between the regions, they followed the same pattern, and the general distribution of more masculine than feminine language and crosstab statistics were not significant. This contradicts some studies that have used gender as a variable and which have found international differences in women's propensity for self-employment (e.g., Thebaud, 2015; Verheul *et al.*, 2006). However, here we explored the use of gendered language and the lack of variation in our sample could be due to entrepreneurship being a Westernized phenomenon (Ogbor, 2000). As we draw on course descriptions, mainly from Westernized,

innovation driven (Porter *et al.*, 2002) nations, written in English, they are likely to be based upon, and reproduce, similar traditions and definitions. Given that these findings, based on common gender-related context variables, could not explain the clustering of the codes, the authors turned to the descriptions and their content.

Gendered language in about, for, and through type courses

Research suggests that different types of EEd courses take different approaches. For this analysis, using the account in the section, "Entrepreneurship education courses and course descriptions" above, the authors developed criteria for identifying the primary aim of a course as either about, for, or through-type courses, then categorized descriptions accordingly.

Courses classified as an about-type class were, for example, where, "The main purpose of the course is to provide knowledge about entrepreneurship" or "to immerse students into the theory of entrepreneurship and new venture creation" or if it "seeks to develop students' appreciation and respect for … the potential entrepreneur" or their "awareness and understanding of the issues surrounding the establishment and development of new ventures."

Courses classified as a for-type class were, for example, where, "Students are taught the skills and knowledge of entrepreneurship and get to practice the entrepreneurial process using a case study approach" or focused on, "working knowledge of the theories" and "in-class" use of that knowledge or if the description emphasized that, "conceptual foundations are matched with practical training."

Courses classified as a through-type class were, for example, where, "The purpose of the course is to … in particular acquire entrepreneurial learning through a simulated process of forming a new venture" or where students were expected to be, "ready to put their knowledge to the test [and] must develop an intervention designed to address issues experienced" or where the learning goal was, "applying theoretical knowledge in a practical and real case" or where the purpose was to, "start your business venture [and where] success is this class … is all about what you can do outside of the classroom."

After classification of the dataset according to course type, we combined this classification with the gender classification. This analysis (see Table 2) suggests a pattern where about-type courses have the least masculine content and through-type courses have the most.

Insert Table 2 about here

Additional analyses of the data set support this pattern. A crosstab analysis indicates a significant (χ^2 (24) =57, $p<0.01$) relationship between course type and degree of gendered language. Further, this relationship is strong (Cramer's V=0.43, $p<0.01$), which suggests that the course type may be the single most important predictor for differences in masculinization of course descriptions.

Discussion

This section discusses the findings in relation to the paper's three main research objectives as presented in the introduction. Regarding the use of gendered language, feminine language was less prevalent and relatively more concentrated than masculine language. As institutions lean heavily on popularized descriptions of entrepreneurship, the course description may play a role in perpetuating the barriers and gendered lack of legitimacy identified by Haus *et al.* (2013), Jones (2015), and Marlow and McAdam (2013).

Regarding the role of language, in constructing students and entrepreneurs as gendered subjects, the analytical constructs of the Fictive Entrepreneur and the Fictive Student have proven useful. The finding, that descriptions primarily construct the Fictive Student—and even more so the Fictive Entrepreneur—as masculine, indicates the type of student institutions attract to entrepreneurship courses. It is worth noting that there were instances where a *feminine* Fictive Student was constructed. However, the feminine Fictive Student is a potential beneficiary of EEd within a particular context—i.e., one in which learning is more abstract and detached, and where there are fewer expectations that students will pursue entrepreneurship as a result of attending a course. This suggests that, in the development of course descriptions, there is some sensitivity to critiques of mainstream representations of entrepreneurship. It may be that critical and feminist research *is* considered at some philosophical level but not at a more practical level. The masculine Fictive Entrepreneur and Student respond well to competitive, challenging, risky environments in an analytical, visionary, and decisive fashion. This leaves little space for those who do not fit this template. Patterson *et al.* (2012) have actively challenged such approaches, arguing that femininities and communal behaviours, identified as feminine in these course descriptions, are important for entrepreneurs and leaders and should be encouraged in EEd.

The constructs of the Fictive masculine and feminine Entrepreneur and Student proved most useful in highlighting the most surprising finding: that gendered language constructs different subjects in different types of courses. Language used in about-course descriptions that teach entrepreneurship as a *phenomenon*, is less masculinized than courses aimed at educating through the practice and *action* of entrepreneurship. However, there is no acknowledgment of the underpinning assumptions of these course types, and their impact on students or the messages they receive about entrepreneurship. This lack of sensitivity to gender dynamics is evident in Mwasalwiba's (2010) EEd literature review, which emphasizes the importance of teachers' aims and pre-conceptions in developing courses, but takes a gender-neutral approach to students. Likewise, other major reviews of EEd over the past twenty years, have positioned the EEd student as homogenous and gender-neutral (e.g., Garavan and O'Cinneide, 1994; Kuratko, 2005; Pittaway and Cope, 2007).

Previous research has, therefore, ignored the gendered implications of course type. The findings suggest that curricula focused on, and privileging, through-type entrepreneurship ignore the gendered implications of doing so. The shift in the gendering of language, as we move from about-type to for- and through-type, is important for four main reasons. First, it suggests that learning *about* entrepreneurship is positioned as more inclusive and gender-neutral. This may be because about-type courses tend to focus on entrepreneurship theories by reviewing a diversity of approaches, and a range of entrepreneurial activities and contexts, such as family business, and social- and minority entrepreneurship. Students may also be encouraged to take a critical stance on popular conventions, such as the heroic individual versus entrepreneurial teams and challenges to trait-based theories (O'Connor, 2013).

Second, the highly masculinized language in through-type courses highlights the suggested behaviours and mind-set required to be a successful entrepreneur, while also constructing the Fictive Student who will do well in such courses. This sends a powerful message to students, not only about the sort of person who will succeed in the course, but also about the sort of person who will succeed as an entrepreneur. While the language highlights activity and doing, it also emphasizes the intellectual, competitive, and visionary capacities needed for success. Therefore, it is not simply that active language is associated with masculinity, but that language linked to excellence in intellectual, competitive, and creative capabilities has masculine connotations. This way, the stereotypical, masculine framing of entrepreneurship by universities may contribute to the trend that male business students increasingly prefer to venture on their own, rather than caring for and developing

their parent's family businesses, leaving many without succession plans (Cieślik and van Stel, 2017).

Third, about-type courses may function well as an entry point for a more diverse range of students who want to engage with entrepreneurship, regardless of their career choices or desire to become entrepreneurs. About-type education supports a more critical approach to these ideas and approaches to entrepreneurship theory. In addition, such courses might be more useful even to potential entrepreneurs, since the through-type courses in our sample imply that entrepreneurs *always* have a unique concept and business plan, *always* present this to investors, and that they do so as confident and charismatic individuals. For the very reason that Gartner (1988) convincingly argues that " 'Who is an Entrepreneur?' Is the Wrong Question" to ask in entrepreneurship research, it may be the *right* question to investigate and challenge in EEd, helping us to highlight and contest masculinized subject constructions.

Finally, Fayolle *et al*. (2006: 716) consider whether educators need to design some EEd courses with specific types of participants in mind. The findings suggest that this selection process might already be happening and that there may be gendered consequences of doing so. Although Rasmussen and Sørheim (2006) argue that the learning process of starting a new venture cannot be standardized in course descriptions, what *is* standardized is masculinized language in courses closest to the practice of entrepreneurship.

Our approach is limited by a focus on course descriptions in English, and there are criticisms of the, "unreflexive use of English in academic practices" (Steyaert and Janssens, 2013: 131). While we accept this as a limitation of our study, we would counter that, with the rise in courses internationally being taught in English, and with English progressively becoming the language of higher education (Coleman, 2006; Mortensen, 2014), our research offers important insights into the gendered consequences of this phenomenon. Indeed, we argue that our research highlights important implications of the growing prevalence of English in HEIs and that it may well perpetuate Anglophone constructions of gender and entrepreneurship in its, "cultural conceptualizations" (Sarifian, 2009: 242). In this respect, we agree with Stayaert and Janssens (2013: 133) that language is based upon power, domination negotiation, and resistance, being imbued with, "cultural, historical, institutional and political dimensions."

Concluding Thoughts

Critical and feminist research highlights and analyses entrepreneurship as a masculinized phenomenon and these debates *are* being brought into the broader entrepreneurship literature (Ahl and Marlow, 2012). However, this is also an important consideration in educational contexts that position entrepreneurship as meritocratic and open to all (Jones, 2015; Siivonen *et al*., 2016), and where the EEd student is positioned as homogenous (Jones, 2014; Rae *et al*., 2012). Consequently, this paper asks new questions, from a constructionist feminist perspective, about the degree to which course descriptions use gendered language, how such language constructs fictive subjects, and its implications. Its contribution is four-fold.

First, it contributes to theory on the masculinization of entrepreneurship by extending these theoretical concerns into EEd. If the bourgeoning feminist and critical critique of entrepreneurship—that *challenge* its masculinization—have extended into the way HEIs position EEd, we would expect to see fewer masculinized subject constructions across *all* types of EEd course descriptions. Our findings highlight the complexity in this area, evident in the shift of gendered subject constructions from *some* feminine about-type courses to *exclusively* masculine through-type courses descriptions. One could argue that this is a result of the link between action-related words and masculinity. Yet nursing, for example, is heavily practice- and action-orientated but positioned as a feminized occupation. The authors suggest that the shift in language has more to do with the practice of entrepreneurship and its position across cultures as a high status occupation (Hechavarría *et al*., 2017). Occupational roles that are perceived as high status are also perceived as masculine (Hellinger, 2001), as is the case for entrepreneurship.

Second, this paper extends Sarasvathy's (2004) concern with barriers to entrepreneurship to include EEd. Given that few people will not become entrepreneurs under *any* circumstances and few people will become entrepreneurs under *all* circumstances, a large majority of us, "will become entrepreneurs under *certain* circumstances" (Sarasvathy, 2004: 709). Thus, Sarasvathy argues we should refocus our research on the barriers to entrepreneurship rather than on motivations and incentives. At a very modest cost, HEIs can pay attention to gendered language in course descriptions—addressing this potential barrier before considering expensive incentives.

Third, this paper contributes to the emerging literature on entrepreneurship as practice (Bruni *et al*., 2004; O'Connor *et al*., 2007) by highlighting how practice might remain gendered. We know that gendered language has consequences for how people understand themselves in the world (Bigler and Leaper, 2015). In our case, potential impacts for EEd

students are suggested by Hechavarría *et al*. (2017:10) who say that, "gendered language may shape thought and action concerning entrepreneurial activity undertaken by men and women." This means that masculine fictive subject construction could signal to some students, more likely women, that they do not belong in through-type courses, and, thus, in our sample, EEd becomes less inclusive the closer it gets to practice. Given the recent turn to practice and concerns with entrepreneur*ing*, rather than entrepreneur*ship* (Johannisson, 2009; Rindova *et al*., 2009), closer attention should be paid to the gendering of entrepreneurship practices more broadly.

Finally, we contribute to the burgeoning literature on the colonization of the English language in international teaching contexts (Mortensen, 2014; Steyaert and Janssens, 2013) in emphasizing its gendered consequences. Indeed, English mediated courses have been shown to present barriers because privileged non-native English speakers, with high social and cultural capital, are more likely to choose courses in English (Lueg and Lueg, 2015).

Given that through-type EEd is considered more effective and desirable than about and for approaches (Hannon, 2005; Pittaway and Edwards, 2012), it is important that future studies identify the effects that such masculinized subject construction may have on students' perceptions and selection of elective EEd courses. With the findings from this study, it is now possible to develop research with students from a variety of cultures and nations to understand how they use course descriptions and the potential impact of gendered language in English mediated courses. Future research might also compare how the Fictive Student and Entrepreneur are constructed in non-English contexts.

Adding EEd to Sarasvathy's list (2004) of potential barriers to entrepreneurship that warrant investigation, future research could focus on whether gendered language does indeed present a perceptual barrier. Furthermore, an analysis of the language used in the entrepreneurship and small business support sectors might also inform research on the take up of business support programs.

Monitoring and auditing who takes EEd classes would give important insights into which students are attracted to EEd and which courses they prefer. This would highlight whether EEd courses are attracting homogeneous or diverse student cohorts. Research could then analyse the language used, consciously change how universities describe their courses, and monitor success in attracting a larger and more diverse student body.

Finally, there are implications for other gendered subject areas seeking to diversify their student cohorts. This would serve the positive value of diversity and address difficulties in recruiting qualified individuals into different professions. For example, many STEM

subjects are increasingly seeking to raise the number of women choosing to pursue them (OECD, 2012). Likewise, caring professions such as health and welfare are seeking to encourage more men (OECD, 2012).

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Appendix: Brine's Three-Stage Approach to Text Analysis (2008)

Brine's Three-Stage Approach to Text Analysis (2008)

1. Pre-text stages:

1) Understanding the general context
   What is known before reading the text?
2) Identifying the text/s
3) Locating the text/s

2. 5-step approach to reading the text:

4) Initial impression
   What, and how much, is in the text?
5) Content analysis
   Identify and count key words/phrases
6) Metaphor and imagery
   Identify, categorize, question
7) Subjects
   Identify subjects and their activities
   Identify and consider relations between them
   What does this begin to tell you?
8) Discourse
   Identify relationship/s between subjects
   What argument is constructed about the subjects?
   What view of the world, or social structure is constructed through the text?
   Who benefits or loses through this construction?
   How does this analysis relate to your analysis of other texts?

3. Post-text stages:

9) Moving beyond the text
   Thinking more about the discourse
10) Theorising (including drawing on existing knowledge/literatures)

Table 1. Distribution of feminine and masculine coded text-strings.

		Gender		Total
		Feminine	**Masculine**	
Fictive Individual	**Student**	*64*	*110*	174
	Entrepreneur	*19*	*66*	85
Total		83	176	259

Table 2. Classification of Course Descriptions by Gender and Type.[1]

	"About" Focus on phenomenon. Course not based on major presentations of actual business plans	"For" Focus on developing a set of vocational skills	"Through" Develop idea to business plan or other action but no real venture creation required, presentation to a panel, etc.	"Through" Actual venture creation
Masculine high / Feminine none		*	***	*
Masculine high / Feminine low		****	*****	*
Masculine high / Feminine high		***	*****	
Masculine low / Feminine none	*******	**********	*******	*
Masculine low / Feminine low	*********	********		
Feminine low / Masculine none	*	****		
Feminine high / Masculine low	**			
Feminine high / Masculine none		*		
No Gender codes / Gender Neutral	*******	****		

[1] Each "X" denotes one course description. Each course description is represented only once in the table, which contains a total of 86 "X", one for each course description. "High" means that we coded three or more text strings in a description as either masculine or feminine; and "Low" means one or two text strings were coded.